

## **Langstaff Family Met Area Medical Needs for Three Generations**

By: Dale C. Maley  
For: Fairbury Blade newspaper  
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The Langstaff family is one of the oldest families in the United States. Their family tree traces back to 1620. In that year, they were among a group of New Hampshire families that were the first to occupy the State of New Jersey. Henry D. Langstaff (1754-1826) served as a Private in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

Henry D. Langstaff's son, Asa Langstaff (1787-1864), moved from Piscataway, New Jersey, to the Irville, Ohio, area. Asa Langstaff was a farmer in Ohio. One of Asa's sons, Henry Clay Langstaff (1816-1893), started to learn the cabinet maker's trade at the age of fifteen. In 1839, Henry married Miss Elsie Uhntemute.

Henry and Elsie Langstaff moved to Bloomington, Illinois, in 1849. For six years, Henry was employed in the machine shop of Flag & Ewing in Bloomington. Henry then bought a farm near Colfax. He made a living as a farmer and carpenter. Henry retired to Lexington, Illinois, and died there in 1893.

One of the sons of Henry and Elsie Langstaff was Henry Wellington Langstaff. He was born in 1855 in Martin Township, near Colfax. In 1880, he married Miss Olive Williams of Lawndale Township. She was the only child of Reverend James B. Williams and Julia A. Powellson.

In 1881, at the age of 26, Henry W. Langstaff started to study medicine with Dr. Stiles of Lexington. He then attended Hahnemann Medical College in Chicago. After three years of study in Chicago, Henry graduated from medical school and started practicing medicine in Colfax, Illinois. He was a medical doctor in Colfax until he died in 1932.

Dr. Henry W. Langstaff and his wife Olive had three boys and one girl. One of their four children was Rubie Wellington Langstaff. He attended Colfax schools and then became a graduate of the Chicago Veterinary College in 1910. He married Ella Getty in 1914. Dr. R. W. Langstaff practiced as a veterinarian in Colfax until he retired in 1950. In 1964, Dr. R. W. died in Colfax.

Another child of Dr. Henry W. Langstaff was Olive Glen Langstaff. He was born in 1890 in Colfax. Unfortunately, Olive Glen Langstaff died just seven days shy of his first birthday.

Elsie Josephine Langstaff was another child of Dr. Henry W. Langstaff. She married Guy O. Hedges. He was a postal employee in Colfax. Guy and Elsie had two girls. Unfortunately, Guy suddenly became very ill and died at only 33 years of age. Elsie J.

Langstaff then married Dr. George W. Sargeant, a Bloomington dentist. Elsie passed away in 1980.

The oldest child of Dr. Henry W. Langstaff was James Hartzell Langstaff Sr. He was born in Colfax in 1883 and attended the public schools. James then attended Illinois Medical College, now a part of Loyola University. He interned at West Suburban Hospital in Chicago. James graduated from medical school in 1903. He started practicing medicine in Roberts, Illinois, in 1903.

In July of 1905, Dr. James H. Langstaff Sr. married Miss Martha Shute of Melvin, Illinois. James and Martha had no children. They divorced sometime before 1910. In October of 1908, James moved to Fairbury and bought the medical practice of retiring physician Dr. Thatcher.

Dr. James H. Langstaff Sr. married Miss Aldine Merit in 1910 in Fairbury. In 1915, their first son, James Hartzell Langstaff II, was born in Fairbury. Dr. Langstaff was the first doctor to provide medical services in Fairbury's earliest hospitals.

In 1917, the United States entered World War I. Dr. James H. Langstaff Sr. enlisted in June of 1918 at Chicago. He was assigned to the Medical Corps at Camp Greenleaf in Georgia. Dr. James Langstaff Sr. was discharged from the military in December of 1918.

Dr. Langstaff returned to Fairbury after World War I ended. He and his wife Aldine had their second son, John Merit Langstaff, in 1919. By 1928, Fairbury's citizens realized the old hospital in the blockhouse at 313 West Oak street was too small. As one option, Dr. Langstaff had the Chicago architect firm of Holabird & Root draw up plans for a new Fairbury hospital in June of 1928. Copies of these blueprints still exist. The Hospital Board decided instead to buy a sizeable existing house on South Fifth Street from the estate of Frieda Munz Scharlach for \$6,155. This home was one of the oldest in Fairbury and was built by J. J. Taylor in 1868. Community members volunteered to convert the old house into a new hospital.

Both sons of Dr. Langstaff and Aldine's decided to follow their father's and grandfather's steps and become medical doctors. Both boys attended Fairbury Township High School. James H. Langstaff II then finished medical school at Loyola University in Chicago in 1942. While he was in medical school, he married Mary Elizabeth Durbin in 1941, just a week before Pearl Harbor. James H. Langstaff II served three and a half years in the Pacific Theater. After being discharged from the Navy in 1946, he returned to practicing medicine in Fairbury.

John M. Langstaff also attended medical school at Loyola University. He graduated in 1944 and then went directly into the U.S. Navy in 1945 as World War II was nearing the end. After the war ended, John returned to Fairbury to practice medicine with his father and brother. In 1947, he married Ruth Ford in Chatsworth. To keep straight which brother they were referring to, Fairbury citizens called them "Doctor Jim" and "Doctor John."

James H. Langstaff Sr. died in 1951. One year later, Dr. John M. Langstaff moved from Fairbury to Florida. He then attended a three-year program at the University of Miami to become a specialist in urology. "Doctor John" practiced medicine in the Miami area until he died in 1987. His brother, "Doctor Jim" continued to practice medicine in Fairbury until he died in 1990. The Langstaff Clinic building on Locust Street is undergoing a significant restoration by Shawn and Tonya Wells. You can follow the progress of this building restoration at the Facebook page titled Langstaff Building Restoration Project.

The extended Langstaff family included four medical doctors, one dentist, and one veterinarian. The Langstaff family provided valuable medical services to three generations in Central Illinois.

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|  |  |               |  | <b>Revisions</b>          |  |
| Designed By:   |  | Approved for  |  |                           |  |
| Checked By:  |  | Construction: |  |                           |  |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> Floor Framing Plan</b>                           |  |               |  | Scale: 1/4"=1'0"          |  |
| <b>Hospital</b><br>For<br>Dr. James H. Langstaff<br>Fairbury, ILL. |  |               |  | Order No.<br>5124         |  |
|  |  |               |  | SHEET No.<br>S-2          |  |
|  |  |               |  | Date: 6-23-28<br>Revised: |  |
| Holabird & Root Architects<br>333 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago       |  |               |  |                           |  |

Title Block of drawing of new Fairbury Hospital proposed by  
Dr. Langstaff in 1928.

